

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1 (currently amended). A printing method of printing an image with a printer having magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) toning capability, the method comprising the steps of:

converting ~~the~~ a digital image into a digital bitmap comprised of an array of pixels wherein each pixel is assigned a digital value representing marking information;

defining each pixel as either a background pixel, interior pixel, or an edge pixel; ~~and,~~

reassigning the digital value of ~~one or more~~ some edge pixels or interior pixels independently, ~~thereby altering the concentration of magnetizable substances within the image when printed in order to improve the readability of printed characters by reading instrumentation;~~

performing the defining and reassigning steps two or more times to provide a reassigned bitmap; and

electrophotographically printing the reassigned bitmap with MICR toner to provide a MICR toner image;

wherein each said reassigning provides interior edges and exterior edges having different values and said reassigning increases machine readability of said MICR toner image.

2 (original). A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a binary digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the binary digital values to multi-bit digital values.

3 (currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a multi-bit digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the ~~binary digital values to~~ multi-bit digital values.

4 (original). A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the reassigning step comprises increasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

5 (original). A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the reassigning step comprises decreasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

6 (cancelled).

7 (original). A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the reassigning step comprises reassigning multiple interior pixel values.

8 (currently amended). A printing method of printing an image ~~with a printer having magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) toning capability;~~ comprising the steps of:

converting ~~the~~ a digital image into a digital bitmap comprised of an array of pixels wherein each pixel is assigned a digital value representing marking information;

defining each pixel as a background pixel, interior pixel, edge pixel, one line pixel, or two line pixel; and,

reassigning the digital value of ~~one or more~~ some interior pixel, edge pixel, one line pixel, or two line pixels independently, ~~thereby altering the concentration of magnetizable substances within the image when printed in order to improve the readability of printed characters by reading instrumentation;~~

performing the defining and reassigning steps two or more times to provide a reassigned bitmap; and

electrophotographically printing the reassigned bitmap with MICR toner to provide a MICR toner image;

wherein each said reassigning provides interior edges and exterior edges having different values and said reassigning increases machine readability of said MICR toner image.

9 (original). A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a binary digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the binary digital values to multi-bit digital values.

10 (currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a multi-bit digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the ~~binary digital values to~~ multi-bit digital values.

11 (original). A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the reassigning step comprises increasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

12 (original). A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the reassigning step comprises decreasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

13-15 (cancelled).

16 (currently amended). ~~An~~ A printing apparatus for altering an image to be printed on a printer having magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) toning capability, the printer utilizing input digital image data comprised of an array of pixels, and wherein each pixel is assigned a digital value representing marking information, the apparatus comprising:

a rendering circuit for defining each pixel as either a background pixel, interior pixel, or an edge pixel; and reassigning the digital value of one or more some of the edge pixels or interior pixels independently, and performing the defining and reassigning two or more times to provide a reassigned bitmap; in order to alter the concentration of magnetizable substances within the image when printed in order to improve the readability of printed characters by reading instrumentation

a plurality of stations together electrophotographically printing the reassigned bitmap with MICR toner to provide a MICR toner image;

wherein each said reassigning provides interior edges and exterior edges having different values and said reassigning increases machine readability of said MICR toner image.

17 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, wherein the digital image data is binary.

18 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, wherein the digital image data is a multi-bit.

19 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, wherein reassigning comprises increasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

20 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, wherein reassigning step comprises decreasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

21 (cancelled).

22 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, wherein reassigning comprises reassigning multiple interior pixel values.

23 (currently amended). ~~An~~ A printing apparatus ~~for altering an image to be printed on a printer having magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) toning capability~~ comprising:

a raster image processor ~~for~~ converting the image into a digital bitmap comprised of an array of pixels wherein each pixel is assigned a digital value representing marking information;

a rendering circuit ~~for~~ defining each pixel as either a background pixel, interior pixel, or an edge pixel; and, reassigning the digital value of ~~one or more~~ some edge pixels or interior pixels independently, and performing the defining and reassigning two or more times to provide a reassigned bitmap; in order to alter the concentration of magnetizable substances within the image when

~~printed in order to improve the readability of printed characters by reading instrumentation~~

a plurality of stations together electrophotographically printing the reassigned bitmap with MICR toner to provide a MICR toner image;

wherein each said reassigning provides interior edges and exterior edges having different values and said reassigning increases machine readability of said MICR toner image.

24 (currently amended). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, wherein converting comprises converting the image to a binary digital bitmap and the reassigning ~~step~~ comprises reassigning the binary digital values to multi-bit digital values.

25 (currently amended). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, wherein converting comprises converting the image to a multi-bit digital bitmap and reassigning comprises reassigning the ~~binary digital values to~~ multi-bit digital values.

26 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, wherein reassigning comprises increasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

27 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, wherein reassigning comprises decreasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

28 (cancelled).

29 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, wherein reassigning comprises reassigning multiple interior pixel values.

30 (original). A method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising classifying edge pixels by direction and reassigning the digital value of the edge pixels as a function of direction.

31 (original). A method in accordance with claim 8, further comprising classifying edge pixels by direction and reassigning the digital value of the edge pixels as a function of direction.

32 (cancelled).

33 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 16, further comprising classifying edge pixels by direction and reassigning the digital value of the edge pixels as a function of direction.

34 (original). An apparatus in accordance with claim 23, further comprising classifying edge pixels by direction and reassigning the digital value of the edge pixels as a function of direction.

35 (currently amended). A printing method of printing an image ~~with a printer having magnetic ink character recognition (MICR) toning capability;~~ ~~the method~~ comprising the steps of:

converting ~~the~~ a digital image into a digital bitmap comprised of an array of pixels wherein each pixel is assigned a digital value representing marking information;

defining each pixel as either a background pixel, interior pixel, or an edge pixel;

classifying edge pixels by direction; ~~and;~~

reassigning the digital value of ~~one or more~~ some edge pixels as a function of direction, thereby altering the concentration of magnetizable substances within the image when printed in order to improve the readability of printed characters by reading instrumentation;

performing the defining and reassigning steps two or more times to provide a reassigned bitmap; and

electrophotographically printing the reassigned bitmap with MICR toner to provide a MICR toner image;

wherein each said reassigning provides interior edges and exterior edges having different values and said reassigning increases machine readability of said MICR toner image.

36 (original). A method in accordance with claim 35, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a binary digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the binary digital values to multi-bit digital values.

37 (currently amended). A method in accordance with claim 35, wherein the converting step comprises converting the image to a multi-bit digital bitmap and the reassigning step comprises reassigning the ~~binary digital values to~~ multi-bit digital values.

38 (original). A method in accordance with claim 35, wherein the reassigning step comprises increasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

39 (original). A method in accordance with claim 35, wherein the reassigning step comprises decreasing the value of edge pixels with respect to interior pixels.

40 (cancelled).

41 (original). A method in accordance with claim 35, wherein the reassigning step comprises reassigning multiple interior pixel values.